2: Belgrave G-3 (1945) 1946 MD1 Syria MD1
Alawite MD7

A 622 792 554 A [791] sense as he could get away with. The story goes that two Alawite priests, whose fortunes were at a low ebb, proclaimed that a dying shepherd boy was the incarnation of Ali. Their idea was to build him a tomb and make it a specially notable shrine to attract large numbers of worshippers. However, the boy, Sulaiman Murshid, survived, and with the aid of one or two ingenious "miracles," which were to earn him the title of "phosphorous boots" in the Royal Navy, he began to build up his reputation as a divine incarnation. He is alleged to have brought forth water from a rock by a contraption of rubber tubes running down inside his sleeve and to have gained many adherents by such wonders. Subsequently the two priests disappear from the story and Sulaiman led a chequered life, during which he greatly increased his land-holdings and therefore his wealth—the Alawite mountains grow the once-famous Latakia tobacco—by somewhat forceful methods. At one time he was on the wrong side of the French Mandatory Authorities and suffered a period of banishment, but he later obtained their favour and in due course became a Deputy in the Syrian Parliament.

S [661] A [595] 663 S 669 When I was posted to Latakia in October, 1944, Sulaiman Effendi was still a Deputy, but very much in the opposition, as he was held in forced residence by the Syrian authorities in Damascus and not allowed to return to his native mountains. He has an agreeable number of wives, one in each of his various villages, but his chief wife, Umm Fatteh, was at that time acting for her absent "Lord" and entertaining lavishly in their mountain residence at Jobit Burghal. Then came an unfortunate difference of opinion between the followers of Umm Fatteh and the local government authorities, the latter's gendarmes suffering a reverse at the hands of the former, who were found to be exceedingly well-armed. Such open flouting of their authority was intolerable to the Damascus Government, and they sent up a large force of gendarmes under an experienced campaigner, Commandant Muhammed Ali. The subsequent proceedings were complicated and there was much political activity, but the French sent Alawite and North African troops to Jobit Burghal to prevent bloodshed and remained in occupation up there during the ensuing weeks, much to the disgust of Muhammed Ali, who was confident of defeating the rebels. Meanwhile Fatteh, eldest son of Sulaiman Effendi, had returned home and was able to practise his fluent French on the various French Political Officers whose duties took them to Jobit Burghal. When the fighting broke out in Damascus and it became clear that the Syrians were determined to stake all they had on a bid for complete independence, Sulaiman Murshid found himself in a most awkward position. After a certain amount of political bargaining, he stood up in the Syrian Parliament and announced a complete change of heart, admitted that he had been wrongly guided by foreign advice, and placed himself and all his followers at the disposal of the Syrian Nationalists. Having thus rallied to the cause of independence, he could no longer be detained in Damascus, and accordingly returned home to his mountain fastness. In addition to the French Moroccan force, this now contained a British "tentacle" in the shape of Captain N——, who was camping up there with Jeep and wireless and liaising with all and sundry, albeit finding his French

2: Belgrave G-3 (1945) 1946 MD1-Syria MD1
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liaison duties less cheerful than they normally are. Sulaiman Effendi's explanations of his *volte face* to the various interested parties must have taxed even his considerable ingenuity.

Such was the position as we held our conference in H.M.S. *Musketeer*, and our problem, since the British were now in the last resort responsible for maintaining law and order, was how to convince the Alawite leaders, and especially the biggest potential troublemaker, Sulaiman Murshid, that there was nothing to be gained by violent action. We could not be sure that he fully appreciated the realities of the situation, since news travels slowly into the Alawite mountains, and our French friends were hardly likely to tell him that the British had moved in in force to clear up the mess into which things had drifted. Neither could we be sure that his verbal adherence to the cause of independence had been more than a ruse to get out of Damascus—he had conveniently left just before the French shelled it. We were most anxious that he should support neither side by deeds, since he could put several thousand tough riflemen into the field and was even alleged by the Nationalists to possess automatics and grenades. We decided to go up to Jobit Burghal to visit the Lord in person and sent a wireless message to our tentacle to prepare him for our arrival.

We set off in two Jeeps before the heat of the day on Sunday morning. Major B—— of the British Security Mission drove Commander S—— in one, and I followed with Commandant Muhammad Ali, representing the local Syrian authorities. The French-commanded Syrian troops eyed us as we passed their defensive positions on the hill that dominates Latakia on the landward side. The summer heat was already beginning to burn the coastal plain to shades of yellow and brown as we branched off the main road and took the bumpy track that leads up into the Alawite hills. We climbed rapidly, past the spot where a truckload of Syrian gendarmerie had been forced to surrender to some of Murshid's "army" after a two-hour battle. I could not help agreeing with Muhammad Ali that it was a perfect spot for an ambush. Soon we were out of the damp heat of the coastal plain and breathing the cool mountain air redolent of the scrub oaks and aromatic trees and bushes whose smoke is used to give the Latakia tobacco its characteristic black colour. The story goes that about a hundred years ago, when Great Britain imported most of the Alawite tobacco, the villagers one year had a bumper crop, much in excess of the amount ordered for shipment. They stored the surplus, and as they were short of space, hung it in the roofs of their houses. The next year, having a bad crop, they decided to include their last year's surplus, but found it was completely black from the smoke of their wood fires. They therefore concealed it in the centre of their bales, leaving the blond tobacco on the outside. Great was their surprise when word came from England that a new kind of black tobacco had been found in the centre of the bales, was pronounced delicious by the pipe-smokers, and they were to send all they could of it. The smoking is now carried on in special buildings in the mountains, the tobacco being brought up on camel-back to the levels where the trees grow and treated there for several months before being carried down to Latakia for shipment.

2: Belgrave G-3 (1945) 1946 MD1 Syria MD1
Alawite MD7

A 262 A 622 619

coffee seated on a row of chairs along the edge of the verandah, while the dancers, who had been performing for at least two hours, redoubled their panting efforts. I took the opportunity of having a quiet conversation about the realities of the political situation with Sulaiman Murshid, who was sitting next to me and was now in a much more forthcoming mood. I found he possessed a pronounced sense of humour and was quick to seize any nuance in what I wished to convey to him. He agreed that his wisest plan would be to keep quiet in his mountains and maintain good relations with everyone, especially the Syrian local authorities, until the larger issues of the Syrian problem had been cleared up, after which I undertook to advise the Governor of the province to give sympathetic attention to the settlement of his affairs. I took it as a compliment when at the end of our talk he remarked: "You know, I think you and I ought to go into partnership; we should do well together." Muhammad Ali then got up and made a speech, in which he dealt wisely with ticklish local problems and assured Murshid's followers that the Syrian Government regarded them all as its children and had nothing against them provided they were loyal. They looked a trifle nonplussed at this sudden change from the status of rebels to children. However, when Murshid got up and said a few words to the effect that they must now follow the Syrian Government and struggle for independence, one could feel the extent of his power in their complete acceptance of the new situation. Someone handed the leading dancer a Syrian flag in place of the coloured kerchief she was waving, and we decided to take our leave, having no desire to back one side more than the other in this quarrel but only to prevent further bloodshed. We left Jobit Burghal and climbed up out of the bowl in the mountains somewhat weighed down with a too-large lunch but hopeful of tranquillity in the mountains and stored with memories of an unforgettable day.

S 669 A 669 641 622 000

Moslems alike whether Turks or Arabs, and being suspicious of the surrounding Kurdish and Bedouin tribes, relied on the French for protection and became a tool in their hands to oppose the nationalistic aims of Syria. 662 182

When in 1936 negotiations between France and Syria started for the conslusion of a treaty similar to the British-Iraqi treaty, French officials in Syria who were opposed to such a policy played on the fears of the Jazirah Christians and incited them to rebellion. They rose up and drove out the Syrian public employees and proclaimed Jazirah independent. They were supported by a majority of the Kurds who feared Bedouin domination in case Syria became independent, and by some Bedouin Sheiks notably the Sheiks of Tay and of Jagjag Jubur. Dham and Mizor, Chiefs of Shammar, and the Sheik of Khabur Jubur, remained loyal to the Syrian Government. The problem was solved when the negotiations in Paris failed and the French resumed their authority in 1937. All remained quiet during the war, and when Syria became independent through the intervention of the British in 1945, no one in Jazirah made any difficulty. 648 669 619

The population of Jazirah was estimated at the end of 1951 to be 162,000. This estimate can only be tentative because no census was taken and the number of unregistered persons is large. The Shammars are mostly unregistered and so are the Juburs. The same holds true of the Kurds who have migrated from Turkey. 162 659 361

The number of members in each denomination is unknown, as is the number of town dwellers. Qamishli is estimated to have 30,000 inhabitants, Amuda and Derbassiya 8-10,000 each, and Hassakeh above 10,000. Kurds probably outnumber the Bedouins in Jazirah.

In the State of Syria the disquiet may be traced back to that opposition to the general policy of the Mandatory Power which has been analyzed in Chapter IX. The opposition was strengthened by the many administrative and economic grievances which have also been dealt with. It found expression in a number of local disturbances and risings at the very beginning of the French occupation, the most notable of them the revolt of Ibrahim Hananu in North Syria and the rising in the Hauran. As time went on the restlessness was increased still further by the instability of French policy: the appointment and recall of a number of High Commissioners; the consequent changes in the higher personnel of the mandatory administration; the creation and then the dissolution of a Federation. These were further causes of disquiet: the repercussion in Syria of the growing hostility of the Palestinian Arabs to Zionism and to British policy, and the activities of Syrian emigrants, particularly of the Syro-Palestinian Committees in Cairo and in Geneva. Of the group in Geneva the leading spirit was the Amir Shakib Arslan, a distinguished writer and publicist, by origin a Lebanese Druze, who had given all his life to the spread first of Pan-Islamic and then of Pan-Arab ideas.

All these factors contributed to create a strong opposition to French rule; it was led and organized by the 'People's Party', which grew rapidly in the years prior to the revolt. The nationalist opposition was to some extent concerned with general Arab problems: the independence and union of the whole Arab world. In local matters, its main purposes were two. First, it advocated the union of the French Mandated Territories. Jebel Druze and the Alawi region, it was claimed, should be wholly incorporated in the State of Syria; Lebanon was to be at most autonomous within a Syrian or Arab State, and was to be shorn of the territories assigned to it in 1920. Secondly, Syria should be given genuine self-government immediately, and complete independence as soon as possible. This would involve on the one hand the relaxation of French control over the administration; on the other a rigid definition of the points at which and the period for which French armed forces could be maintained in Syria, and ultimately their complete withdrawal. It was around these two points that Franco-Syrian relations revolved throughout the period of the Mandate.

11: Hourani S-4 (no date) 1946 MD1 Syria #101

631 both districts for a period of five years from the coming into 648 force of the Treaty.

631 The Treaty and the new régime were received with approval 664 by a number of the Druzes and Alawis; even former 186 autonomists expressed their loyalty to the Syrian Government. This reaction, however, was transient and deceptive. In Jebel Druze discord began to arise early in 1937, after the appointment of Nasib al-Bakri, a Damascene Moslem, as first Governor of the province. A powerful party demanded the appointment of a Druze notable, Hasan al-Atrash, and also a large measure of autonomy; the nationalists asserted that it was encouraged to go to extremes by local French officials. There were also, however, many Druzes who supported the nationalist Government and the Governor whom it had appointed. Attempts were made with no more than a temporary success to reconcile the advocates of separatism with those of unity. The disturbances were not ended until the Governor resigned and was replaced after an interval by Hasan al-Atrash. By the end of 1937 the Jebel was quiet enough to enable Parliamentary elections to be held. The calm continued throughout 1938, but at the beginning of 1939 [669] disturbances began once more. The separatist group accused the Syrian Government of bad faith, expelled Syrian officials from the province and declared the independence of Jebel Druze under the protection of France.

A similar process had meanwhile been occurring in the Alawi district, which was known under the new régime as the Province of Latakia. Here, as in Jebel Druze, there was tranquillity at first, and Parliamentary elections were held in 1937. But the calm was short-lived. The Alawi notables protested against the appointment of Syrian Moslem officials, and more especially of nationalist Governors, first Mazhar Raslan from Homs and then Ihsan al-Jabiri, a Sunni Moslem from Aleppo. The nationalist policy of assimilation was perhaps carried out hastily and tactlessly, the Governor alienated large sections of the population, and at the beginning of 1939 armed bands rose in revolt under the leadership of the deputy Sulaiman Murshid, a brigand who had proclaimed himself 'God' and had secured considerable local influence with the help of certain French officials. At about the same time the visit of the High Commissioner, M. Puaux, was made the occasion for demonstrations in favour of autonomy. Soon

afterwards the Governor found his position impossible and 631
was compelled to abandon it. He was not replaced, his 664
powers being assumed in July by the High Commissioner's 186
Delegate.

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The Franco-Syrian Treaty of 1936 effected no formal change in the status of the Jazirah, but its signature was followed by the replacement of the French officials who had ruled it until then, by Syrian administrators. Here as in Jebel Druze and the Alawi region discontent soon showed itself. There were some who felt and expressed loyalty to the new national Government. But there was an important element which demanded that the ties between the Jazirah and the central Government in Damascus should be as loose as possible, or should be severed altogether. Their minimum demand was that the local officials should be chosen from among the local population; their maximum, for complete separation from Syria. Their discontent was increased by the lack of wisdom shown by some of the more irresponsible nationalists, although the Government itself acted on the whole in a conciliatory manner. The autonomists appear to have been encouraged by certain of the local French officials; the nationalists claimed, indeed, that here as among the Alawis and Druzes the minorities would have acquiesced in their rule had it not been for the activities of French agents. The separatists were themselves divided on everything except their dislike of being ruled by the nationalists of Damascus. Some were Kurds, who objected mainly to being ruled by Arabs; others Christians, who objected also to being ruled by Moslems. These two groups sometimes but not always acted together during the years from 1936 to 1939.

Serious trouble first broke out in June, 1937, when the 669
Kurds of Hassetche revolted against the appointment of 563
nationalist officials from outside the Jazirah. The rising was 631
quelled with the aid of the French military authorities, but it was soon taken up in Qamishli and elsewhere by the Christians, who demanded a special statute similar to that of Alexandretta, an administration which would give equal weight to the rights of all sects and races, and the withdrawal from the province of officials who had not been chosen from the local population.

11: Hourani S-4 (no date) 1946 MD1 Syria MD1

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The disturbances reached their height in August, when a number of Christians in Amudah were killed in an altercation with a group of Kurds instigated by a Kurdish chieftain who supported the nationalist Government. The intervention of French troops and the removal of certain unpopular officials restored order for a time. But beneath the surface discontent continued, and the separatists began to form themselves into societies for the defence of their rights, with a central committee to co-ordinate their activities. In December, 1937, some separatists from Hassetche kidnapped the Governor of the Jazirah, Tawfiq Shamiyyah, a Greek Orthodox Christian from Damascus; he was released after a few days, and his kidnappers were arrested.

The Governor was shortly afterwards replaced by a new one, a Moslem, who made a conciliatory statement of policy. It did not, however, appease the separatists. They demanded the release of those who had been arrested for kidnapping the former Governor, and also the dismissal of certain officials. When the new Governor failed to persuade the Syrian Government to yield to these demands, he was chased from the province. The separatists then drove out other nationalist officials, boycotted the administration and reaffirmed their demand for a separate government under French control.

While these events were occurring in the Jazirah, the separatist case was being urged in Paris and Rome by Cardinal Tappouni, the head of the Syrian Catholic Church, who had constituted himself the spokesman of those Christian minorities who were opposed to nationalist rule. In a memorandum submitted to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs in November, 1937, he spoke of the possibility of a massacre of the Christians in the Jazirah and elsewhere, and made various proposals for avoiding it: that the religious communities should be given complete equality in religious and personal matters; that an equitable number of Christian officials should be appointed; that the Syrian Government should maintain, in districts where the Christians might be menaced, adequate means for their protection; and that a régime of decentralization should be introduced, such as to safeguard the interests of the minorities. The French Government, which was then negotiating with the Syrian Prime Minister in order to obtain more explicit guarantees, replied in a vague and conciliatory fashion.

11: Hourani S-4 (no date) 1946 MD1 Syria MD1

The situation remained as it was until the beginning of 1939, when agitation for the release of the kidnappers of the former Governor occurred. In June organized manifestations on a large scale took place in all the towns of the province; but the French authorities intervened and restored order.

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No sooner had the Franco-Syrian Treaty been signed than criticism of it began to appear in France. In part this criticism came from those who opposed the whole idea of a treaty, believing the Syrians to be still unfit for self-government. Others, while admitting a treaty of some sort to be desirable, were doubtful of the adequacy of the existing Treaty: because it aimed at creating a unitary State in a country so divided as Syria; or because its guarantees for minorities and its provisions for the maintenance of French military forces upon Syrian soil were insufficient; or else because it did not stipulate for the repayment to France of the expenses incurred in the administration of the Mandate.

These doubts were reinforced by the events of 1937: the Alexandretta question, and the growth of the separatist movements in Jebel Druze, the province of Latakia and the Jazirah. It was obvious that the French Chamber and Senate would only ratify the Treaty provided that they were reassured on these and certain other points. The Syrian Prime Minister therefore went to Paris in order to negotiate with the French Government an agreement upon the points at issue. He left Syria in November, 1937, and returned towards the end of December. The result of his visit was an exchange of letters between him and M. de Tessan, Under-Secretary of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, dated December 11th, 1937. The letters included a further guarantee by the Syrian Government of its intention to respect all the rights granted by the Treaty to the minorities living under its sway; and an undertaking by the Government to accept the technical experts recommended to it by the French Government. The letters closed with a statement of the desire of both parties to continue the policy of co-operation.[1]

These undertakings were accepted by nationalist opinion as being inevitable in the circumstances, and ratification of the Treaty was eagerly awaited. In March, 1938, indeed, Mardam

[1] See Appendix A4.

15: Khadduri S-4 (no date) 1951 MDl Syria MDl

were to be carried out by a special decree. Article 89, which specified that the number of ministers was not to exceed 7, was amended to read 12. Finally, Articles 71 and 115, specifying the procedure of electing the first President of the Republic, were deleted.[18]

THE MILITARY COUPS D'ÉTAT

The Quwwatli regime, which could flatter itself on having achieved full independence for Syria, failed to inaugurate the reforms which were so badly needed. The criticism levelled against the Government — that it was corrupt and permitted the aggrandizement of its Ministers — might have been exaggerated, but it will be noted that the Government's "constitutional reform" merely amended those articles which related to the re-election of Quwwatli to the Presidency and to the Cabinet membership, ignoring many other gaps and defects in the constitutional organization of the State. This fact lent substance to the criticism that the Government paid attention only to matters that served the interests of the ruling oligarchy.[19]

Matters came to a head when the Syrian Government (jointly with the other Arab Governments) failed to forestall the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine. The Quwwatli regime's attempt to shift the responsibility of defeat to the Army precipitated a reaction. Colonel Husni al-Za'im, secretly encouraged by the opposition parties, raised a military coup d'état on March 30, 1949, which overthrew the Quwwatli regime amidst popular enthusiasm and approval.[20]

Za'im's coup, by eliminating the party which was so avowedly opposed to uniting or even cooperating with the two neighboring Hashimi Kingdoms, at once reopened the question of the future organization of Syria: whether it would be monarchical, by joining a union with Iraq, or maintain a separate republican

[18] For text of the Amendment Law, see the Syrian *Official Gazette*, Vol. 30 (March 25, 1948), p. 756. For further details on the Amendment of the Constitution, see Wajih al-Haffar, *Al-dastur wa al-hukm* [*The Constitution and the Government*] (Damascus, 1948), pp. 123–30.

[19] Wajih al-Haffar, *op. cit.*, pp. 153–54; M. Kurd Ali, *Al-Mudhakkerat* [*Memoirs*] (Damascus, 1948), Vol. II, p. 530.

[20] For the background of this movement, see Alford Carleton, "The Syrian Coups d'Etat of 1949" *Middle East Journal*, IV (Jan. 1950), pp. 1–11.

15: Khadduri S-4 (no date) 1951 MDl Syria MDl

Za'im was overthrown by his opponents on August 14, 1949, having remained in power only four and a half months. Colonel Sami al-Hinnawi, who led this second coup and executed Za'im, reversed the policy of friendly relations with the Saudi-Egyptian bloc and again opened negotiations with Iraq for a Syro-Iraqi union. Elections for a Constituent Assembly were held in November, but when the Assembly met on December 12 and was about to approve a project for union with Iraq, a third army move on December 14, led by Colonel Adib Shishakli, sealed the fate of unity with Iraq under a dual monarchy. Shishakli declared that the Army would no longer interfere in politics and that government by civilians would be maintained; but it remained clear that the Army would continue to resist any policy which ran counter to its wishes.

The Constituent Assembly elected Rushdi al-Kikhya, leader of the People's Party which won the elections, as its President, and Hashim al-Atasi, an old member of the Nationalist Party, as the temporary head of the State. On January 7, 1950, after a long cabinet crisis attributed to the intervention of the Army in politics, President Atasi took an oath of office and the Constituent Assembly gave temporary legislative and executive powers to the Government, subject to its control, until the promulgation of a Constitution. In the meantime a committee of 33 members, under the chairmanship of Nazim al-Qudsi, was appointed to prepare a draft constitution for the Assembly. The Committee began its meetings on January 4 and completed its work three months later. As its chairman stated in his report to the Assembly, the Committee made use of no less than fifteen European and Asiatic (including Arab) constitutions, and received proposals from individuals and organizations either directly or through the press.[22] The draft Constitution, consisting of 177 articles, was communicated to the President of the Assembly on April 15, 1950, but debate did not get underway until July 7. After prolonged discussion, first on the draft generally and then article by article, the Constitution was approved with considerable changes (including reduction to 166 articles) on September 5,

[22] See text of the Report in the *Official Gazette*, Vol. 32 (June 22, 1950), Appendix, pp. 1–2.

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S L 175

ed a governor for Lebanon before the latter was displaced by the French (whose historic interests in Lebanon had been recognized by the British Government in the correspondence with the Sharif Hussain). While Faisal and Lawrence were presenting the Arab case to the Paris Peace Conference, the French were consolidating their military hold on the Levant. Eventually Faisal and Clemenceau came to a provisional agreement for an autonomous Syrian state under the tutelage of France (as conceded by Britain in the secret Sykes–Picot Agreement of 1916, which had not been communicated at the time to the Sharif and his sons); but French tutelage was not acceptable to the Damascus politicians who in March 1920 proclaimed Faisal King of an independent Syrian state. In the following month, however, the French obtained Britain's agreement, at the San Remo Conference, to their exercising a Mandate over Syria as well as Lebanon; the new Mandatary defeated Faisal's little army at Maisalun on 25 July 1920 and entered into possession of Damascus, from which Faisal fled into exile.

S L 648

The French Mandate, 1920–45

Since Crusader times, France had been interested in protecting the Christians of the Levant, and the twentieth century gave her the added incentive of creating a counter-balance to Britain's growing influence in the Middle East. The Maronites welcomed the French, and the latter accordingly expanded the small area of the Sanjaq of Lebanon to include the cities of Beirut, Tripoli, and Sidon, as well as the Biqaa, so as to give this 'Greater Lebanon' the largest possible area in which there would be no danger of a Muslim majority. The French applied to Syria the principle of *divide et impera* and four separate states were set up: that of the Alawis (Jebel Ansariya, including Latakia), that of the Jebel Druze, and Damascus and Aleppo (in 1925 combined into a single state of Syria). The French further encouraged separatism in the Jezira, and designated the area of Antioch and Alexandretta (in which the largest linguistic community was the Turkish) as an autonomous sanjaq.

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The majority of Syrians never readily accepted French rule and risings occurred in the Ansariya, near Aleppo, and near Dair az-Zor; these were soon put down but a greater rebellion began in the Jebel Druze in 1925 and spread to Damascus and to Hama. The French bombarded Damascus in October 1925 and in May 1926 but did not succeed in completely quelling the revolt until August 1927. Thereafter negotiations for a treaty stumbled through the years, punctuated by disturbances, broken off from time to time and marked throughout by bitter-

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ness on both sides. In Syria (and to a lesser degree, in Lebanon) the possibility of long-term co-operation between the nationalist politicians and the Mandatary was frustrated alike by the attitude of most French officials and by that of the local urban populations who, though they later signed the 1936 treaty, desired full self-government.[1] The advent to power in France of the Front Populaire in 1936 eased the situation: treaties with Syria and Lebanon were negotiated whereby the Mandate was to be transformed into an alliance with independent states, but under which France could still maintain troops in the Levant. However, the French Parliament was unwilling to ratify the Syrian treaty under the lengthening shadow of the impending Second World War, and Syrian indignation was increased when the need for Turkey's friendship led France in 1939 to cede to Turkey the Sanjaq of Alexandretta, afterwards renamed Hatay. Leading Syrian politicians refused to co-operate with the French on these terms, and on the eve of the outbreak of war the French High Commissioner once again suspended the Syrian constitution and governed the country through French and Syrian officials; the same procedure was applied to Lebanon after the outbreak of war.

When metropolitan France fell in 1940 the Mandate was carried on by the Vichy Government until the latter's acquiescence in the use of the Levant airfields by the German air force necessitated the intervention of British and Free French forces in June 1941. After a short but bitter campaign, the Vichy forces signed an armistice in July 1941. In the struggle between the Allies and the Axis and between Vichy and de Gaulle the Syrians and Lebanese took no part, but their independence had been promised by the Allied Command. On behalf of the Free French, General Catroux, in a statement on 8 June 1941, proclaimed the end of the Mandate, but in fact the Free French regarded themselves as trustees for France's position, seeking to maintain them by installing Syrian and Lebanese supporters of France in the seats of authority. The Free French had, however, eventually to yield to the demand for popular elections, which was supported by the British Government as soon as the victory at al-Alamain (October 1942) had finally removed the threat of Axis invasion from the Middle East. In Syria the elections of 1943 brought into office the National Bloc with Shukri al-Quwatli as President of the Republic and Saadullah Jabri, Jamil Mardam, and Faris al-Khouri as parliamentary leaders. In the Lebanon also nationalists were successful and the leader of the 'Constitutional Bloc',

[1] For details, see A. H. Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon* (London, RIIA, 1946).

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14 smaller ones, and destroyed 150 houses. An unknown number of Jews was butchered to death.

By the time Palestine was invaded by the Arab States, the Jewish communities in Syria were completely isolated. No Jew dared to have any contacts abroad or, for that matter, with any foreigners resident in the country. Commercial activity came practically to a standstill, since Jews were forbidden to open their shops or to carry on with their employment.

The property of a transport company, owned by an Iraqi Jew, was confiscated, and the entire Jewish staff arrested. Fifteen Jewish girls who worked in the telephone exchanges in Aleppo and Damascus were dismissed. The Chief Engineer of Damascus, who had held this position for 12 years, suffered the same fate, together with five Jewish school teachers. The school building of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* in Damascus was requisitioned for the military. The already impoverished community was forced under threat to donate about £S10,000 (at that time equivalent to £1,100) to the Arab funds.

Throughout the months of fighting, a relentless campaign demanding the confiscation of all Jewish property went on. The Damascus Jews felt themselves fortunate in being spared a repetition of the earlier Aleppo riots, though in August, 1949, 11 were killed when a bomb was thrown into a synagogue.

For some time the situation of the Jews in Damascus was extremely grave. Being prevented from earning a living, the community was so impoverished that it was feared that many would die of hunger and disease. Had it not been for the assistance of the Jewish community in Beirut, the Damascus community might well have perished. Later, their straits were further relieved by American help.

With the overthrow of the Syrian Government by Husni Zaim in March, 1949, all restrictions on the movements of Jews, as well as on the sale of property, were abolished. The new ruler declared that he would deal severely with any person attempting to discriminate against the Jews. The lifting of the travel ban was immediately followed by a new wave of Jewish emigration to Lebanon.

The confused situation arising out of Zaim's murder, and the succession of political *coups* which followed, make the prospects of the Jewish community uncertain. But even if the new Government were to abstain from any official discrimination against the Jews of Syria, the atmosphere has been poisoned to such an extent that a return to normal conditions and peaceful relations seems most unlikely. On the face of it, nothing will alter the passionate wish of practically every Jew in Syria to shake the country's dust off his feet.